DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 363 391 PS 021 334

AUTHOR Wakschlag, Lauren S.; And Others
TITLE Intergenerational Continuities: The Influence of the Mother-Grandmother Relationship on Parenting of Young African-American Mothers.
PUB DATE Mar 93
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (60th, New Orleans, LA, March 25-28, 1993).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Black Mothers; Child Caregivers; Child Development; *Child Rearing; *Early Parenthood; Family Characteristics; Family Life; *Grandparents; Longitudinal Studies; One Parent Family; *Parent Child Relationship; Parenting Skills; *Young Children
IDENTIFIERS African Americans; Intergenerational Households; *Multigenerational Relationship

ABSTRACT

A study examined adolescent and young mothers' parenting competence as a function of the quality of their relationship with their own mothers. The study focused on child-rearing in families of young African American mothers in which multigenerational patterns of caregiving and co-residence were prevalent. Data were derived from a longitudinal study of low-income African American mothers begun 20 years ago. The original adolescent mothers, now in their mid-30s, participated in the present study as grandmothers along with their daughters, who became mothers in adolescence or young adulthood, and their 3-year-old children. Mother-grandmother and parent-child interactions were assessed using videotaped problem-solving tasks; mother-grandmother interaction was assessed in a structured disagreement task using the Scale of Intergenerational Relationship Quality instrument. Four variables analyzed were: (1) emotional closeness; (2) positive affect; (3) grandmother assertiveness; and (4) mother autonomy. Findings indicated that mothers who interacted with their own mothers in a more mature, flexible, and autonomous fashion were likely to be facilitative, provide emotional support, be affectively positive, and have disciplinary styles characterized by warmth and appropriate control with their children. Mothers' ability to communicate clearly and assert their separateness while maintaining an atmosphere of mutuality with their own mothers was directly related to effective parenting. (SM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 363 391

Intergenerational Continuities: The Influence of the Mother-Grandmother Relationship on Parenting of Young African-American Mothers

Lauren S. Wakschlag
Department of Psychiatry
University of Chicago

P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale
Chapin Hall Center for Children
and
Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies
University of Chicago

&

Jeanne Brooks-Gunn
Center for Young Children and Families
Teachers College
Columbia University

PS 021934

Poster presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, New Orleans, Louisiana, March 25-28, 1993.

Please address all correspondence to Dr. Lauren Wakschlag, Program Director, Parent-Infant Development Service, Section of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, University of Chicago, MC3077, 5841 S. Maryland, Chicago, IL. 60637.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Lauren S. Wakschlag
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC).

Research on young motherhood has focused almost exclusively on the mother-infant dyad with little attention to broader family processes. This approach overlooks the social-ecological context of child-rearing in African-American young mother families in which multigenerational patterns of caregiving and coresidence are prevalent. In addition, studies have often disregarded the negotiation of developmental issues between mother and grandmother during adolescence and the transition to young adulthood as a critical determinant of adaptation to parenthood.

In the present study, adolescent and young adult mothers' parenting competence was examined as a function of the quality of their relationships with their own mothers. Findings reported here emerge from the 7th wave of a longitudinal study of low-income African-American mothers begun over 20 years ago. The original adolescent mothers, now in their mid-30s, are participating in the present study as grandmothers along with their daughters who became mothers in adolescence or young adulthood (mean age-at-first-birth = 18) and their 3 year old children. 103 3-generation families, including a highly comparable supplemental sample, participated in a home-based study including extensive interviewing to obtain socio-demographic information and

videotaped family interaction sequences.

Mother-grandmother and parent-child interactions were assessed through the use of videotaped problem-solving tasks. Mother-grandmother interaction was assessed in a structured disagreement task using the Scale of Intergenerational Relationship Quality (SIRQ; Chase-Lansdale, Wakschlag & Brooks-Gunn, 1991) developed for the present study. 22 variables were rated for mother, grandmother and dyad (see Table 1). Factor analysis yielded four meaningful and interpretable factors (alphas ranging from .78-.90) (see Table 2). Factor I, Emotional Closeness, was comprised of variables tapping into the emotional context of the relationship. Factor II, Positive Affect, captured the degree to which the dyad interacted with each other in an animated, engaged fashion. Factor III, Grandmother Assertiveness, reflected the grandmother's communicative style in interaction with her daughter including her ability to express herself in a firm, positive and self-confident manner. Factor IV, Mother Autonomy, captured the young mother's ability to communicate clearly and to maintain her separateness while maintaining an atmosphere of mutuality. (This factor was not correlated with maternal age.) Parenting was assessed using the semi-structured Puzzle Task adapted by Goldberg & Easterbrooks (1984) from a tool task developed by Matas, Arend & Sroufe

(1978). Three dimensions of parenting were coded: Problem-Solving styles, Affect and Disciplinary Styles (Baumrind, 1989; Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1988). Interrater reliabilities for both tasks were high, averaging 84% agreement on the disagreement task and 92% agreement on the puzzle task.

Regression analyses, controlling for socioeconomic background variables, were conducted to test the effects of mother-grandmother relationship factors on mothers' parenting. Mother Autonomy was highly predictive of a wide range of mothers' parenting outcomes. Mothers who interacted with their own mothers in a more mature, flexible and autonomous fashion were more likely to be facilitative ($B = .31$, $p < .08$), provide emotional support ($B = .54$, $p < .0023$), be affectively positive ($B = .34$, $p < .03$) and have disciplinary styles characterized by warmth and appropriate control with their children ($B = .41$, $p < .0074$). Thus, positive developmental achievements for the mothers in the context of the family of origin were linked to positive mothering behavior. Mothers' ability to communicate clearly and assert their separateness while maintaining an atmosphere of mutuality with their own mothers was directly related to mothers' effective parenting and was a much stronger predictor of mothers' parenting than their age. Surprisingly, Emotional Closeness was not a significant predictor of mothers' parenting, possibly because this factor

influences child outcome indirectly through the emotional context of family interactions rather than via a direct influence on the quality of parenting provided by the mother.

However, we believed that a "person x process x context" interaction (Bronfenbrenner, 1989) might be influencing parenting as well. We tested mother-grandmother relationship factors interacted with mother's age-at-first-birth and coresidence status and this 3-way interaction significantly predicted mothers' parenting. The Mother Autonomy x age-at-first-birth x co-residence interaction was significant for a broad range of maternal parenting outcomes. For the group of mothers living independently, younger mothers who were high on Autonomy when interacting with the grandmothers, were strikingly better at parenting (see Figure 1). Since young mothers are more likely to need the support provided by coresidence, this finding is likely driven by a sub-set of unusually mature younger mothers living independently. For coresiders, in contrast, the strong positive effects of Mother Autonomy on parenting were seen primarily with the older mothers (see Figure 2). Since the positive effects of coresidence appear to wane as mothers get older (Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn & Morgan, 1987), it appears that Mother Autonomy may serve as a protective factor for parenting when older mothers continue to coreside.

References

Baumrind, D. (1989). Rearing competent children. In W. Damon, (Ed.), Child development today and tomorrow (pp. 349-378).

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1989). Ecological systems theory. Annals of Child Development, 6, 187-249.

Chase-Lansdale, P.L., Wakschlag, L., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (1991). The Scale of Intergenerational Relationship Quality. Unpublished manuscript.

Furstenberg, F.F., Brooks-Gunn, J., & Morgan, P. (1987). Adolescent mothers in later life. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Goldberg, W.A. & Easterbrooks, M.A. (1984). Toddler development in the family: Impact of father involvement and parenting characteristics. Child Development, 55, 740-752.

Hetherington, E. M. & Clingempeel, G. (1988). Longitudinal Study of Adjustment to Remarriage: Family Interaction Global Coding Manual. Unpublished manuscript.

Matas, L., Arend, R., & Sroufe, L.A. (1978). Continuity of adaptation in the second year: The relationship between quality of attachment and later competence. Child Development, 49, 547-556.

Table 1: Scale of Intergenerational Relationship Quality:- Scale Variables

	Rated for:		
	Mother	Grandmother	Dyad
Scale Variables:			
Affect			
Cheerful/Animated	x	x	
Warm/Caring	x	x	
Angry/Hostile	x	x	
Depressed/Withdrawn	x	x	
Emotional Tone			x
Communication			
Communicative Clarity	x	x	
Quality of Resolution			x
Disagreement Content	x	x	
Autonomy/Closeness			
Assertive Self-Confidence		x	
Demandingness		x	
Validation		x	
Emotional Maturity	x		
Request for Emotional Availability	x		
Request for Instrumental Assistance	x		
Connectedness			x
Comfort with Disagreement Process			x

Table 2: Scale of Intergenerational Relationship Quality: Factor Composition and Factor Loadings

Variable	Factor Loading
Factor I: Emotional Closeness	**Alpha = .91**
Dyadic Emotional Tone	.90
Dyadic Connectedness	.88
Mother Angry	-.82
Grandmother Angry	-.82
Mother Warm	.75
Grandmother Warm	.74
Grandmother Validation	.70
Dyadic Quality of Resolution	.57
Factor II: Positive Affect	**Alpha = .78**
Grandmother Happy	.81
Mother Happy	.80
Mother Depressed	-.71
Mother Cried	-.60
Grandmother Depressed	-.60
Grandmother Cried	-.51
Factor III: Grandmother Assertiveness	**Alpha = .90**
Grandmother Assertive Self-Confidence	.89
Grandmother Demandingness	.85
Grandmother Communicative Clarity	.84
Factor IV: Mother Autonomy	**Alpha = .80**
Mother Emotional Maturity	.90
Mother Communicative Clarity	.85
Dyadic Comfort with Disagreement	.68

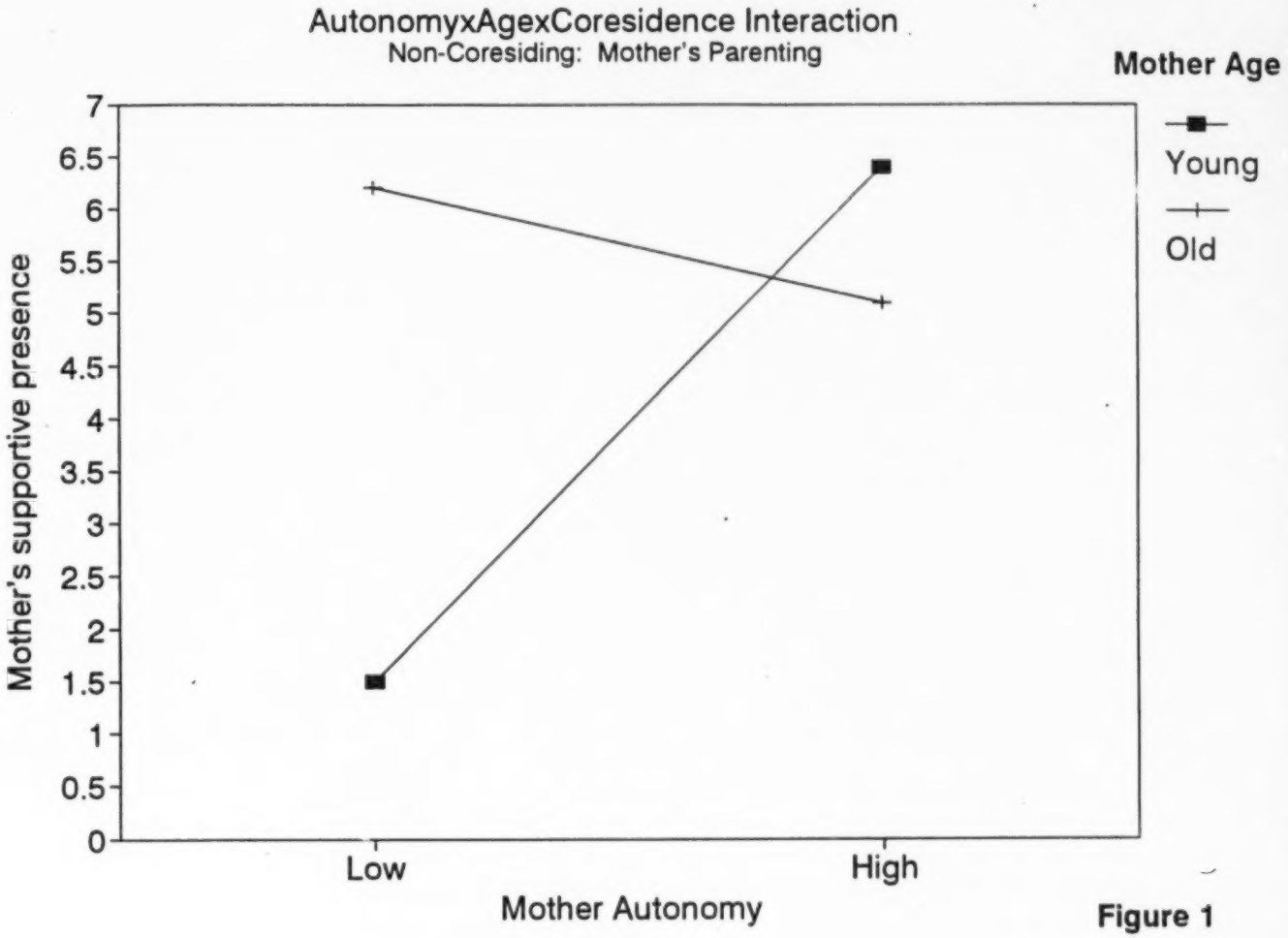
AutonomyxAgexCoresidence Interaction
Non-Coresiding: Mother's Parenting
Mother Age
Young
Old
Mother's supportive presence
7
6.5
6
5.5
5
4.5
4
3.5
3
2.5
2
1.5
1
0.5
0
Low
High
Mother Autonomy

Figure 1

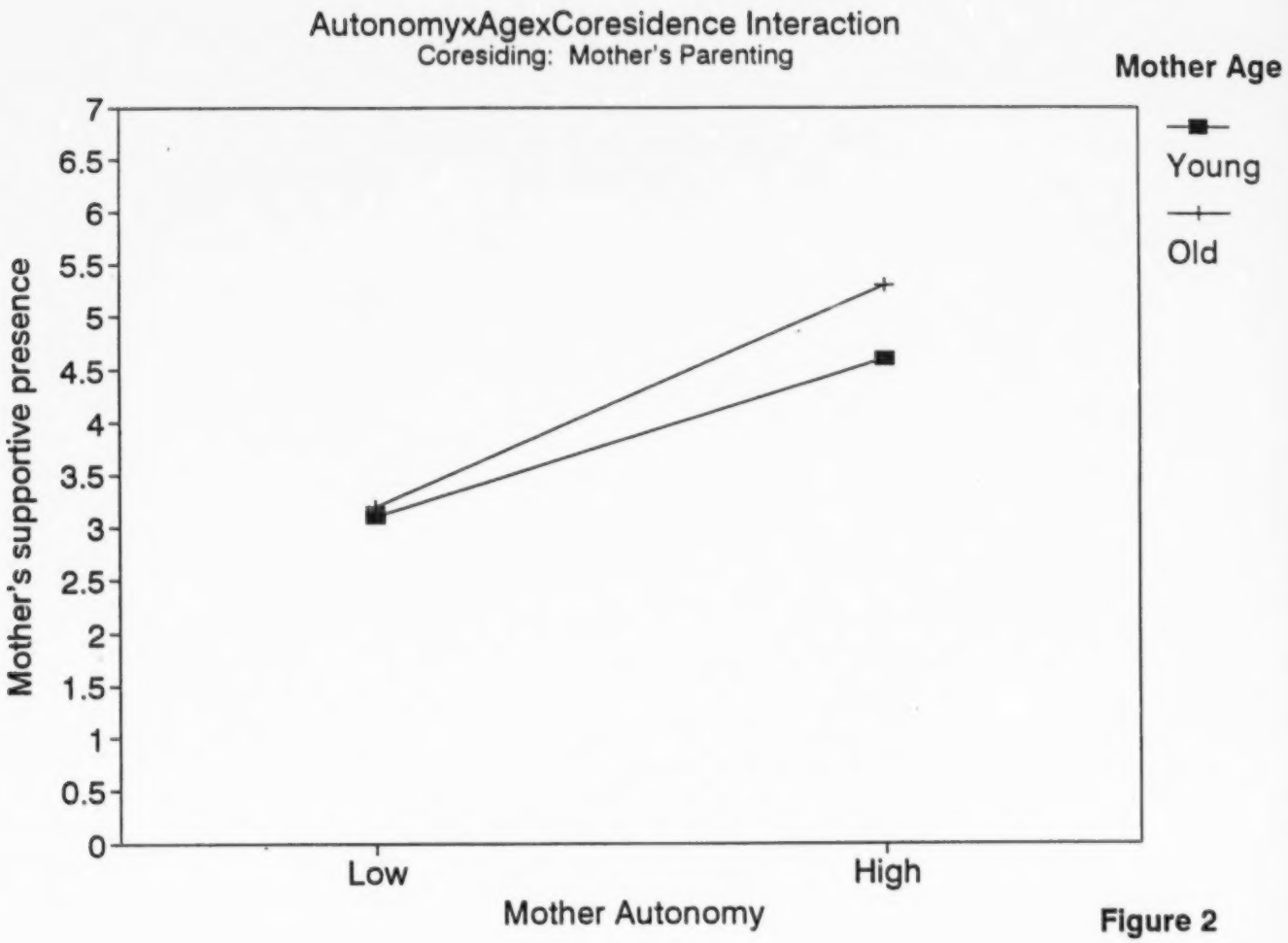
AutonomyxAgexCoresidence Interaction
Coresiding: Mother's Parenting
Mother Age
Young
Old
Mother's supportive presence
7
6.5
6
5.5
5
4.5
4
3.5
3
2.5
2
1.5
1
0.5
0
Low
High
Mother Autonomy

Figure 2